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REVIEWS.

Concerning the Unwritten History of the Modern Language Association of America: The President's Address, delivered on the 30th of December, 1902, at the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Association, held at the Johns Hopkins University. By James Wilson Bright. [Reprinted from the Publications of the Association for 1903.]

The indefatigable Secretary of the Association, on becoming its President, took occasion to comment, from his breadth and accuracy of knowledge concerning its history, on some of the lessons of its experience. In place of giving an abstract of his views, we prefer to let him speak for himself, and therefore subjoin a few of the significant passages culled from different parts of his address.

‘But let it be repeated that the purposes to be served in the founding of this Association were not involved in an assault upon the classical traditions of the college, in an indictment of a fetish-worship of the Greek language; nor were those purposes either helped or hindered by the comparative tests applied to the ‘modernist’-education of the *Realschule* and the ‘classicist’-education of the *Gymnasium*. . . .

‘In every department of literature the formula of modernity mediates between the mediæval and modern periods and that of antiquity. Mere chronology fails as surely to carry us from Vergil to Dante as it fails to carry us from Plutarch to Montaigne, from Martial to Herrick, from Lucian to Landor, or from Theocritus to Tennyson. The modern drama has its formula of a distinctly new beginning, and a history that is unrivaled in human interest. What is the formula of the *Völsunga*, of the *Muspilli*, and of the *Beowulf*? The “Western hypothesis” challenges the profoundest knowledge of classical antiquity and the exercise of the scientific imagination in the reconstruction of the processes by which cosmographical, mythological, and ethical elements may be transmit-

ted and transformed into new systems. What expression have we for the relation between the Orient and the Occident in fable and story? How do we pass from the *Panchatantra* to the *Decameron*? from Æsop, who has himself become a myth, to Marie de France, who has almost become one? The formula of modernity must also comprise literary art, and the systems of criticism; and it must be enlarged to include the systems of philosophical thought. In its most comprehensive reaches the formula of modernity for both history and philology must represent the blending of the great systems of civilization; the Germanic, the Slavonic, the Celtic, the Greek, the Semitic, and the Latin, these systems in different combinations constitute the fundamental elements of the great European nationalities. From the point of view that might be gained from the just consideration of the formula of modernity, is not modern philology also a profoundly great and worthy science? . . .

‘The truest philological insight will be required to compose those chapters that may adequately make manifest what classical philology bequeathed to modern philology, and what modern philology gave in return. There will be a record of inheriting from the classical side the technicalities of systematization and the product of the wisdom of generations in grammar, rhetoric, palæography, archæology, the arts, and criticism. Modern philology will be rewarded for verification of technicalities and traditions by observation of vernacular phenomena. The science of phonetics and the study of living dialects will be described as bringing sheaves to the richly stored old garners. The hegemony of literary centres rising and falling in the midst of dialectal rivalry will be illustrated for Greek by modern European parallels; and the modern literatures will be acknowledged to give additional breath to the view that perceives that the canon of literary art-forms is not closed, that it probably never can be closed. . . .

‘Surely knowledge, and culture, and conduct will more and more be established, and more and more generally acknowledged and felt to be established, upon the work of the exact scholar, the specialist, who silences all narrow questioning by the wide-reaching paradox of the poet’s query :

How fail

To find, or, better, lose your question in this quick
Reply which nature yields, ample and catholic?

The scientific specialist will contribute for conduct a code of honesty, modesty, caution, and tolerance; on the other hand, the new manner will more and more require that the culture-subjects be brought under the law of accuracy: literature, æsthetics, the arts, criticism, and religion, will more and more become scientific. And thereby the duties and the joys of life will be made deeper and broader, and they will be filled with truer significance; citizenship, too, will then be no less a profound duty, and it will surely be a profounder joy. . . .

‘At no time has the philological future promised such rich rewards as it now holds in its generous hands. In modern philology the recent past has had its enthusiasms, and many of the keen delights and prompt rewards of pioneering; these experiences, not unaccompanied by hardships and beset by hindrances, have necessarily preceded the fuller life of more complete cultivation. We are upon the eve of that fuller life. Ampler provision for the future of modern philology could hardly have been made in so brief a period. No more inviting conditions for the profound study of problems in the history of the human mind could easily be imagined than those which are now provided and which unite and interlock the different philologies.

‘National progress, too, requires the profound study of these problems; for the philological sanity and strength of a nation is the measure of its intellectual and spiritual vitality. Here is high service for state and nation. No statesmanship is higher than that to which the philologist may attain. He legislates for the activities and behavior of mind and spirit; he must therefore share in the “work of guiding the destinies of the country.”’

These sentences will bear pondering by the novice in philology, and they may even inspire renewed enthusiasm and courage into here and there a veteran. It is encouraging, when such views are held by those in authority, for it is an assurance that their successors will not grope their way in darkness for lack of a guiding word. To the pioneers has fallen an arduous task; those who follow should have ampler results to show, for they will march in a plainer path toward goals more clearly defined.

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